

Editorial

With this first issue of the 56th volume of *Business History*, a new editorial team is taking over responsibility for direction and management of the journal. Led by executive editor Ray Stokes (University of Glasgow), the team includes as co-editors Andrea Colli (Bocconi University), Stephanie Decker (Aston University), Paloma Fernández Pérez (University of Barcelona), Abe de Jong (Erasmus University Rotterdam) and Neil Rollings (University of Glasgow), who will also serve as deputy editor. In addition, the book review editorship has been expanded. Joining Kevin Tennent (York University), who has acted as sole book review editor over the past years, will be Veronica Binda (Bocconi University). Veronica Binda will be primarily responsible for books published in, or reviewed by authors from, Italy, Spain, France, and Portugal.

The editorial team is therefore both substantially larger and more international than has been the case in the past. In addition, it is worth noting that the scholarly research interests of the editors responsible for the original articles published in the journal range broadly and include business, management, accounting, finance, organisation studies, technology and innovation, industrial associations and family business, among other things. Taken together, these attributes constitute something we and the committee led by outgoing editors Steve Toms and John Wilson that accepted our bid for the editorship of the journal believe is needed moving forward owing to the growth in the number of issues per year, the range and number of submissions and the increasingly international profile of *Business History's* authors and referees.

As we take up this challenge, we want to outline our editorial philosophy and goals as well as indicating some of the changes in procedures and governance that we are starting to implement.

Before we do that, though, we would like first of all to express our thanks to the outgoing editors, who over the course of the past several years have positioned *Business History* so that is much more international in terms of geographic coverage, authorship and reputation, and who have also actively encouraged engagement with, and participation of, non-business historians as authors and as editors of special issues. Steve Toms and John Wilson thus leave the journal in a very healthy state, and we are particularly grateful that they have made our job of assuming control of the journal easier by virtue of the large numbers of articles and special issues that are in the pipeline for publication in the course of 2014 and, to some degree, into 2015 as well.

Editorial philosophy and goals

The field of business history has enjoyed substantial growth in numbers of practitioners and in stature over the course of the past decade and a half. This growth in numbers and stature has a number of causes. One key impetus has of course been the extensive efforts of many business historians, who individually and collectively have actively developed the field through strengthening training, developing increasingly active and influential professional associations and of

course improving journals such as *Business History*. All of these areas of improvement have been enhanced still further by greater internationalisation of the field, both in terms of participation and geographic coverage.

But a second important reason for growth lies in the fact that the field has also benefitted from intellectual trends in the social sciences more generally: after all, concepts and approaches such as path dependency, varieties of capitalism and evolutionary economics, to name just three, are all at their core profoundly historical, and business history approaches in particular can and do enrich all of them. What is more, the central scholarly and analytical importance of these historically informed social science disciplines as well as that of business history itself has been underscored by the crisis that started in 2008.

Finally, related to the first two points, business historians have been increasingly prominent in business and management schools, especially in the UK, and this prominence has further encouraged increased levels of interdisciplinarity and influence. The result of the interaction of all of these factors has been the emergence of exciting opportunities for intellectual interchange and cross-fertilisation across a number of disciplines.

We believe strongly that *Business History*, which under its outgoing editorial team has both benefitted from and shaped these trends, should in future under our editorship continue to do so by becoming even more open; even more interdisciplinary; and even more international in its authorship and scholarly coverage. These, then, along with raising the overall quality of manuscripts accepted for publication, form our primary goals.

But we believe just as strongly that the journal can best achieve these goals through explicit acknowledgement that the journal's primary identity and point of departure must remain *business history*. For this reason, a central criterion for publication in the journal will be a manuscript's contribution to business history as a highly valued and independent field of endeavour engaged in active dialogue with other social scientists and other varieties of historians.

We therefore encourage and welcome submission of manuscripts not only from those who identify themselves as business historians, but also from scholars from any other social science or humanities discipline, providing that the submission engages with development over time of firms or other business organisations; their broader political, social and cultural context; or those who direct, are employed or are affected by them. Manuscripts accepted for publication will normally be based on extensive primary sources, which may include some combination of archival material, primary printed sources, datasets or other numerical data, oral history, illustrations or artefacts. Alternatively, we would be open to occasional exploratory or conceptual pieces of particular intellectual merit. Any methodology can be used as long as it is applied rigorously, and deployment of innovative methodologies will be especially welcome. Manuscripts should engage with debates in the field, with explicit and frequent references to published scholarship. Those using business historical perspectives to engage with important debates in or across other disciplines are

encouraged, too. Explicit engagement with theory, while attractive, is not a prerequisite for publication; but all articles accepted must move decisively beyond chronology or simple presentation of empirical detail to make generalisations supported by the evidence. Finally, the argumentation and analysis must be of high quality.

Our openness with regard to disciplinary origin and methodology extends to subject matter. The traditional foci of business history—the firm; its political, economic and social environment; or those who run it or are affected by it—will no doubt account for the bulk of articles accepted and published, just as is the case now. But we especially want to encourage submission of the results of research that grapples with issues “beyond the firm” using business history perspectives. This includes, for example, investigation of organisations outside the world of private, profit-seeking business that share many of the core characteristics of the private firm, organisations that may be linked to government, education, health care, philanthropy, religion and other pursuits. It also extends to consideration of the deployment of business practice, organisational forms and rhetoric drawn (or allegedly drawn) from private firms within non-business organisations. Third, submissions which analyse the broad context within which firms operate, for instance through consideration of the impact of social and political movements on company behaviour, are welcome. Finally, we would be particularly pleased to receive high-quality manuscripts that investigate the interaction between firms and the physical environment—for instance through consideration of the ways in which managers have dealt with air and water pollution, or explorations of the genesis and development of firms developing “green” technologies.

Changes in procedures and governance

Business History has a well deserved high status internationally, a function in large part of longstanding procedures for ensuring rigorous peer review of manuscripts, which in turn ensures that the journal publishes scholarly research in business history of the highest international standards. Obviously, under our editorship, *Business History* will continue with these procedures. The enlarged and internationalised editorial team, however, requires a somewhat different implementation of them, and we also have in mind some changes in governance and communication structures that are meant to enhance quality still further and also to maximise transparency. We will be placing a full statement of governance structures and procedures on the journal’s web page during 2014. Just now, we would like to sketch out how the journal will operate and some of the changes that will occur as a result.

The decision on the composition of the editorial team has been shaped guided by a number of considerations, including international profile and networks; recognised expertise across a wide and diverse range of areas of business history; diverse international locations and diverse language competencies; and moving towards gender balance. Our view is that the size and composition of the editorial team will enable us not only to attract manuscripts and proposals for special issues from a wide variety of disciplines and geographic locations, but

also to deal efficiently and flexibly with the large number of submissions and of issues of the journal.

As has long been the case, prospective contributors must submit manuscripts via the ScholarOne platform. They will then be examined for completeness by an editorial assistant before being passed on to the executive editor, who will allocate those incoming manuscripts that appear to conform to the criteria outlined above in terms of subject matter, approach and findings to one of the co-editors. That co-editor will be responsible for seeing the manuscript through the refereeing process and will ultimately make the decision whether or not it will be published. For this reason, we have decided that the responsible editor's name will be indicated on the first page of all articles published in the journal.

We recognise keenly that this decision-making process depends fundamentally on the work of referees, and we will be taking steps to promote greater recognition of that work and greater transparency in our decision-making process for referees in particular. To that end, we will be seeking to recognise the work of particularly thorough reports in various ways, and we will, as soon as it is technically feasible, ensure that referees are sent the full set of editorial and anonymised referees' comments that are sent to authors.

We recognise that special issues are important for the journal in a number of ways, not least since a focused set of articles attracts attention from current and new readers and also often leads to publication of manuscripts by authors who might otherwise not submit to the journal. The initiative for commissioning special issues may be taken by one or more of the co-editors or else by others from the broad community of those involved in business-history related research. We would ask the lead person or persons who wish to prepare a special issue to provide the executive editor with abstracts and brief CVs of the proposed contributors, along with suggestions for potential referees. The executive editor will then evaluate the proposal and may consult co-editors on suitability. If we consider a proposal to be of sufficiently high quality, one co-editor will be assigned to agree with the guest editor(s) a timetable for completion of the refereeing process and for final submission of the articles. The guest editor(s) will still be autonomous to a large degree, but the whole process will be carefully monitored by the responsible co-editor to ensure consistency of practice.

We will be making other adjustments to strategy and governance over the course of the next year, and the most important policies and procedures will be available on the journal's web page. In the meantime, though, we are very much looking forward to the challenge of not only maintaining, but also enhancing, *Business History's* status as a leading international scholarly journal, and to this end will formally launch our editorship at a reception in conjunction with the first meeting of the World Business History Conference in Frankfurt in March 2014.

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